

Blue Clay People

This was story about the people of Liberia. They tell a tale of how humans came about. "It all started when God came down off his mountain and got down to the business of making people. He molded the first six human being out of blue clay – three men and three women. By the time the sun was setting they were almost perfect. All that was missing was a little spice. Pepper would do. But as God was grinding pepper with two stones, something happened that would change the entire course of history; God sneezed. This caused pepper to fall on the still wet clay. He had let loose a fire that would burn in their blood, making people destroy each other and all nature."

William Powers went to Liberia with the CRS (Catholic Relief Services) to direct a multimillion dollar portfolio of agriculture, health and food distribution programs out of an air-conditioned office in the capital, Monrovia, but he vows that he will get to know the people. William's mission was to empower Liberians taking charge of their own development while securing the rainforests for the future. Powers faced many challenges and opposition from other expats living in Monrovia. They wanted to stay in within the relatively safe bubble of the capital. As they saw it there was no reason to make your job a harder than it needed to be.

Powers saw things differently and he took extra steps to ensure that he would go out the far villages that could only be reached after the rainy season was over. When Powers traveled out to the villages he found that the projects that were on the agenda in the past might have been completed but they were completely useless. For example there was a bridge that the CRS had used its funds build in order to help the locals navigate over a stream but the people in charge of the project never consulted the locals about the requirements that they need in the bridge. As a result the locals were in the process of making a different bridge that would be able to withstand the weights that they were going to be transporting over the bridge.

Over the course of the two years Powers was in Liberia he struggles with how to best help the people. He struggles with the corruption and the lack of success of many of the programs that have been implanted. Toward the end of his two year stay Powers found out that more than half of the orphanages that he was distributing food were made up. The children knew when the deliveries would be and just showed up and pretended to be an orphanage so that they could get free food. Another challenge that Powers faced was one against Charles Taylor, the president of Liberia. Timber and diamonds are the livelihood of dictators like Taylor. Taylor allowed a large logging company to start logging in the only national forest that Liberia had during the time that Powers was in Liberia. Powers struggled to find ways to save the national forest and protect the vast eco-system. As the logging continued to destroy the forest the rebels starting to have a growing presence that was moving toward the capital with the hopes of overthrowing Taylor. With the growing presence of the rebels everyone was put on high alert and soon after Powers left the rebels reached the capital and overthrew Taylor and exiled him.